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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [PREL](#) [SNAR](#) [GV](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: GEN. WARD SIGNS CISMOA; DISCUSSES AQIM, ACSA,
GUINEA, NARCOTICS AND FUTURE COOPERATION

REF: STATE 130969 (NOTAL)

RABAT 00000005 001.2 OF 003

¶1. (S) Summary: General Ward of Africa Command visited Rabat on December 30 to sign the Communications Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA) and continued military cooperation. During meetings with Inspector General Bennani and other Moroccan general officers, General Ward and the Ambassador requested overflight clearance for the P-3 (Reftel); asked for an assessment of the threat posed by AQIM; urged Morocco to keep Guinean junta leader Dadis Camara in Morocco a long time; and said he looked forward to returning to sign the ACSA. General Bennani and his senior staff reacted positively to the overflight request and said they would examine it in more detail. They thought Guinean Defense Minister Konate was weak, and, unlike other senior Moroccan officials, they downplayed the importance of narcotics transiting Morocco. End Summary.

¶2. (C/NF) Commander, U.S. Africa Command, General William E. Ward visited Rabat on December 30, 2009 to meet with Inspector General of the Moroccan Royal Armed Forces (CHOD) General de Corps d'Armee Abdelaziz Bennani for the purpose of signing the Communications Interoperability and Security Memorandum of Agreement (CISMOA) between the U.S. and Moroccan militaries. Accompanied by Africa Command Foreign Policy Advisor Dr. Raymond Brown, General Ward and his party met with the Ambassador and other members of the country team. General Ward reinforced the strong relationship between the U.S. and Moroccan militaries and predicted the agreement would lead to continued and expanded cooperation between the two nations in the future.

Communications Interoperability and Security MOA

¶3. (SBU) General Ward expressed satisfaction with his visit to Morocco, following recent visits to Algeria, Libya and Mali and serving to show equality in dealing with the militaries of a region that does not tend toward regional cooperation. He further expressed admiration and satisfaction with the mission's work supporting U.S. Africa Command's goals and objectives, particularly in the areas of security cooperation, international development and economic stimulation. He again explained the purpose of his command as orchestrating security activity on the continent in support of national policy and objectives, and declared his support for all other agencies, work in Africa.

¶4. (C/NF) At the signing ceremony, General Bennani warmly welcomed General Ward's visit both professionally and personally, expressing his esteem for the vision and progress with U.S. Africa Command. He emphasized that King Mohammed VI had designated him to sign the CISMOA on behalf of Morocco, with the understanding that the agreement was integral to the full utilization of the F-16 by the Moroccan Royal Air Force, but also with a vision to future cooperation for integration of technologies and weapons systems for the navy and army. He further reiterated previous statements that the King wished the Moroccan Royal Armed Forces to be on par with American forces in order to permit full integration and interoperability should the commanders-in-chief of both countries decide to employ their forces in a coalition or combined operation.

¶5. (C/NF) General Ward returned the warm greetings and stated that the agreement was both a symbol of the relationship between the two countries and signal of their commitment to mutual security.

¶6. (C/NF) General Ward explained that teams would visit Morocco in January and February to discuss implementation of the CISMOA and implementation meetings would take place three times per year thereafter. General Ward said that he looked forward to returning to Morocco to sign the Acquisition and Cross-Servicing Agreement (ACSA) as soon as it has received the necessary clearances from the Department of Defense, and

RABAT 00000005 002.2 OF 003

General Bennani responded that he looked forward to General Ward's next visit and to his participation in the next signing ceremony.

AQIM

¶7. (S) Turning to regional issues, General Ward asked General Bennani how he saw the regional threat from Al Qaeda in the Lands of the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM) and narcotics traffickers. Bennani responded that narcotics were not making their way into Morocco. However, AQIM posed a serious threat to countries like Mauritania and Mali that could not counter the terrorists. General Bennani explained that he was intimately familiar with Mauritania's geography and topography and that the country was not capable of

controlling its territory. Brigadier General Abdellah Hamdoun, the Director of Military Intelligence, offered that Mali lacked the means to counter AQIM. General Ward then briefed General Bennani, Air Force Commander Major General Ahmed Boutaleb and other general officers on the U.S. plan to gather intelligence about AQIM in Mali and Mauritania and requested overflight clearance for a U.S. EP-3 aircraft. General Bennani responded positively, saying it was important to box in AQIM. General Boutaleb added that the Air Force and the General Staff would study the overflight request and respond quickly.

Guinea

18. (S) General Ward next noted that Morocco was hosting some important guests. General Bennani asked if he was referring to President Sarkozy or former President Chirac. General Ward replied he was referring to Guinean junta leader Dadis Camara and Guinean Minister of National Defense Sekouba Konate, asking about their conditions. Surprisingly, Bennani had no information about either and did not even know that General Konate was in Morocco)- although he had attended the Moroccan military academy and had strong ties to Moroccan leaders. General Ward strongly urged that Morocco keep Dadis Camara as long as possible. General Bennani noted that Camara was in Morocco on humanitarian terms, and responded only that many African leaders come to the Mohammed V Military Hospital in Rabat for free medical care. General Hamdoun suggested that Konate was weak and might not be fit to serve as head of state for an extended period.

Comment

19. (C) General Bennani, who can be very prickly, appeared upbeat throughout the ceremony and related discussions. The CISMOA brings a level of U.S. scrutiny and procedure to the control and dissemination of the cryptographic and keying material associated with U.S. weapons systems that can appear intrusive to a sovereign nation. However, the General seemed thoughtful as he digested the discussion of the upcoming implementation and programmatic activities that would take place in the coming months and years. He and the rest of the senior military leadership seemed totally uninformed about patients at the military hospital. Moreover, General Bennani's comments about narcotics transiting Morocco were at odds with comments from key civilian leaders who express significant concern about this matter.

110. (C) In sum, General Ward's visit accomplished the necessary act of signing the document integral to full and timely implementation of the F-16 program in Morocco, and reinforced the already strong relationship between the U.S. and Moroccan militaries. The upcoming year will see a full slate of security cooperation activities between the two militaries, building to the delivery of the first F-16 in July 2011. End Comment.

111. (U) General Ward has cleared this message.

112. (U) Tripoli minimize considered.

RABAT 00000005 003.2 OF 003

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